

**Welcome to Partner Conversations; a series of interviews from the Edinburgh Trust where we learn more about the work of our partners across the city and the challenges faced by the people they support. My name is Ems Harrington and I'm the Edinburgh Trust Senior Partnership Development Officer. Today I'm speaking with Duncan Campbell from Fresh Start, a charity helping people who have been homeless get established in their new home.**

**Ok, so if you'd like to start by introducing yourself. If you can let me what know your name is and the organisation that you work for.**

Yeh, my name is Duncan Campbell and I work for Fresh Start. It's an Edinburgh charity working with people who have been homeless.

**And Duncan can you describe the work that your organisation does?**

Fresh Start provides short term practical support to people who have experienced homelessness, moving through that and getting into their tenancies.

**And what is your role within the organisation?**

My job title is Starter Pack and White Goods Development Worker. And basically, my role is to help people who are looking for [and] needing white goods; cookers, washing machines, fridge freezers and other household items such as pots, pans, bedding, curtains, towels. These kinds of things Fresh Start are able to provide through funding applications for the white goods and also receiving donations of household items.

**And how do people go about accessing that service? Are they referred, or can they self-refer?**

People can be referred and there are self-referrals aswell.

**So how does the Starter Packs work? How does the whole thing work for people?**

So, like I say, people are moving into a tenancy, they've not got anything and basically, we can help provide the essential, the smaller essential items that really take up a lot of money and you don't really realise you need them until it's time to have them. So, its pots and pans, its crockery, crockery packs, there's cleaning [and] we do bedding packs. Other agencies maybe provide you with the furniture so they would help provide you with a bed but you don't get any bedding so that's how Fresh Start really started. It was to work alongside other agencies to help basically fill the gaps that were still there that people still needed. So for example the cleaning packs; they've got lightbulbs, cloths, bin bags, that kind of thing in them. And yeh, it's just stuff that when you move into a tenancy you don't realise you need them until you're in. And then you've got enough outgoings in that time anyway so yeh it just helps, it just all helps.

**Thats great. How long has Fresh Start been around for?**

Weve been around for.... it was our 24th year now, so we started just before the millennium.

**And do you work across Edinburgh or is it in a specific part of Edinburgh?**

All the services are all Edinburgh. We provide a number of different services from provision of goods like I'm involved with, we do our HIT squad service, which is maybe not the best name, but it's a decorating service where we can go and help people decorate up to two rooms in their tenancy. The

person would get to pick which colours they want and which rooms they want to get painted. The idea behind that service is there's a group of volunteers that go into the tenancy and help with the painting, so it helps break down a bit of social isolation. The client could learn new skills [and] at a later date they can decorate the rest of the tenancy on their own and it also gives them a bit of pride and ownership in that tenancy. Because when that service was first started people were sometimes voiding tenancies. It was just down to the, you know, they'd been through the whole system and including the tenancy and the whole new pressures coming in. You move into a tenancy how the previous tenant moved out so it could be that you just didn't like the colours that it was painted, and you've just got no connection with that tenancy. Whereas after the HIT squad that's yours, you've got a bit of pride knowing you've painted that and its colours that you like so you're less likely to void the tenancy aswell. A simple idea but it works really well.

**So, in your experience, how have things changed for the people that you support since the 2020 covid pandemic and also with the current cost of living crisis? And how has that impacted the work of your organisation and your work aswell?**

Well, we're busier with the cost of living and things like that. Fresh Start normally works with people who have previously been homeless [and] we're now doing more work with homeless prevention. So, people are accessing goods and services; white goods and appliances so to try and help them maintain tenancies. So yeh with the cost of living if we have a family with three kids and the cooker is broken, you know, how are we going to feed them? It's an expense they cannae afford so yeh that's where we will step in and try and help them with that.

**And so, has the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis kind of increased, like different areas of work for yourselves or like has it stretched your capacity or have you been able to manage what you've been seeing?**

Its stretched us but we are managing. Yeh but we are busier, it's getting busier, and we are noticing a real difference. Also, the conflict in Ukraine and things like that, we are doing lots of things with Ukrainian refugees and refugees from other places as well. So its yeh, it's a lot of things just happening at the one time is really impacting on what we are doing.

**Thanks Duncan. So just to move in a little bit of a different direction around our partnership. So, in April last year, 2022, so the Edinburgh Trust relaunched our grants programme with a developed model that was around shifting and power away from us, the Trust, and into the communities in which we deliver support. And the model, as you know, was created to prioritise the preservation of dignity of people who received our grants and also to build more collaborative, trusting relationships with local organisations. So I wanted to know, as someone who has been making applications to the Edinburgh Trust for many years, what are your thoughts on this model change and how do you see your work fitting in with that way of working?**

Yeh, I think it does give more dignity to the person. Previously, providing bank statements and things like that, I think a lot of people were a bit maybe scared, for want of a better word. They felt that maybe we were going to be judging what they spent their money on and things like that so yeh, "you can't buy something from Greggs if you are coming for a whatever" so yeh it takes that side of it away and is a bit more personal.

**And going back to your own work, what are the main challenges for you in your work at the moment? Or are there challenges in your work?**

Yeh, the amount of referrals we are bringing in at the moment is increasing so it's keeping up with that. The majority of our starter packs, a lot of the stuff that we get is through donations so trying to keep up donations and keep that number up. And also, the items that aren't donated, we've got to balance that. There's more, there's more demand so we've got to meet that so trying to keep the funding going aswell.

**And where do the donations come from? Is it from individuals or is it from organisations?**

Yeh, we get, it's a mix. There's individuals, a lot of individual donations [and] we get a lot of support through different organisations and the churches aswell.

**What is rewarding about your work?**

Ah that's easy that, it's just helping people. Seeing, getting their reactions to how you've helped them; they've got their new white goods or their, even their pots and pans, whatever. You know the reaction of the person is just really good.

**What would help you in your role? More donations?**

(Laughs) Yeh, more donations! That would probably be a big thing. It's quite a big question, I could think on that and come back to you (laughs).

**Or even, I suppose, what would help your organisation?**

Yeh, I mean, donations of goods and funding aswell. I think every organisation is looking for funding at the moment. The cost of living is having a lot of effects on things.

**What are your hopes for the future? For your own work and for the people that you support.**

We were talking before and it's the cliché of not being needed you know. It'd be nice to be quieter (laughs), we love helping as many people as we can but it's just a real shame that so many people are needing the type of help that's provided. So yeh, I suppose in an ideal world we would be, maybe to be quieter.

**And lastly, what does Edinburgh mean to you?**

I think Edinburgh is really good. It's like a big, small town, you know a lot of people, you get to know what's going on. I think it's got a good mix of cultures. I really like it yeh.

**Thanks so much Duncan, thanks for your time and for chatting with me. Where can people learn more about your work?**

You can go to the Fresh Start website, so just google Fresh Start Edinburgh and you'll find us. Yeh you can find out about our cooking classes, starter packs, white goods services, HIT squad, gardening. Yeh, full range, a quite good mix of things to be seen.

**Brilliant, thank you so much. Thank you.**

**This interview was carried out and produced by Ems Harrington, Senior Partnership Development Officer at the Edinburgh Trust. Sound production by Miles, Programme Assistant at the Edinburgh Trust.**

**The Edinburgh Trust is part of national poverty charity, Turn2us, and we have over a decade of experience in giving direct financial support to people experiencing poverty in Edinburgh. You can learn more about our work by going to [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)**